



Capitol Holidays

News & Updates from Your State Capitol during the Holiday Season
By Arkansas Secretary of State Charlie Daniels

Holiday Issue

2003

Traditions Old & New

Bring out the garland, string the lights and start tying the bows – arrangements are underway at the state Capitol for an entertaining and traditional holiday season. The annual holiday lighting ceremony on December 6, immediately following the Big Jingle Jubilee Holiday Parade, officially starts the state's holiday season. In preparation for this sixty-five year old tradition, many plans are in place to make this celebration at the Capitol exciting for you and your family.

Bringing in the New...

New features of the Capitol decorations include a poinsettia tree, placed in the first floor rotunda, new ribbon and garland throughout the building and new ornaments for the magnificent rotunda tree. This year's tree, a live eastern red cedar donated by Mr. and Mrs. Bob Staton of Belleville, is approximately 20 feet tall and 12 feet in diameter.

New holiday tree ornaments, representing landmarks from Arkansas's 75 counties and hand-painted by artists from the Cox Creative Center in Little Rock, adorn this spectacular tree. At the official tree-trimming ceremony, scheduled for December 4 at 4 p.m., Secretary Daniels will join county representatives, artists and special guests in featuring the

county ornaments on the tree. These ornaments will be a focal point for the rotunda tree for many years to come.

Other new activities include a winter wonderland scene perfect for those family photos on the first floor of the Capitol and a performance at the December 6 lighting ceremony by the Arkansas Arts Center Tell a Tale Troupe.

...While Keeping the Old Favorites

Many of the traditional favorites of the season will again make an appearance this year. Once again, the Capitol will be ablaze with thousands of lights outlining the building. The downtown Little Rock Christmas Parade will end at the Capitol, with the lighting ceremony immediately following the parade on December 6.

This year, the George Jernigan tree, a live cedar tree located on the front lawn of the Capitol, will once again serve as the state's official tree and will be decorated with hundreds of lights. Secretary of State George Jernigan planted the tree in 1976 as the state's official holiday tree.

Of course, the season's most famous celebrity will make an appearance at the lighting ceremony to greet the children and find out who's been naughty or nice.



Happy Holidays Arkansas! The Capitol is full of excitement and enthusiasm about this wonderful time of the year. I'm so pleased to continue the rich traditions of the holiday season here at the Capitol.

I hope you and your family will attend the rotunda Tree-Trimming program on December 4, the Capitol Lighting Ceremony on December 6, and come to hear the talented choirs from schools around the state as they perform in the rotunda from December 1 to December 17. Plan to do some of your shopping in our newly remodeled Capitol Gift Shop – I'm certain that you will find the perfect gift for someone on your list.

Be sure to look for your county's tree ornament on the rotunda tree and enjoy all the interior decorations that make the Capitol a truly special place during the holidays. This issue contains specific information about all of these events – please keep it close at hand to remind you of all the details. Also, our office website, www.sosweb.state.ar.us, has a special holiday link that contains choir performance times, photos and more.

I wish you and your family a very merry holiday season.

(See TRADITIONS Cont. page 2)



TRADITIONS (Cont. from front page)

The traditional fireworks show will end the program and officially usher in the holiday season. Top of the Rock, a women's acapella barbershop group, will once again perform in the second floor rotunda following the lighting ceremony and fireworks.

Sounds of the holiday season will ring through the halls of the Capitol as choirs from schools around the state perform in the second floor rotunda December 1 through December 17. Exhibits on display during the holiday season include a collection of Santa figurines and the hand-carved catalpa wood nativity scene. For more information about Capitol holiday traditions and the 2003 choir performance schedule, visit our holiday website at www.sosweb.state.ar.us.

Make plans now to visit the Arkansas State Capitol during the holiday season to experience a true Arkansas holiday tradition. Holiday hours of operation are from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. seven days a week from December 6 – January 1.

Stocking Stuffer Tidbits

The state of Arkansas declared Christmas a legal holiday in 1838.

Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights, lasts for eight days.

Over two miles of lights are placed on the Capitol to decorate the building for the holidays.

300 yards of ribbon were used to make the bows for the 2003 rotunda tree.

The interior garland contains over 600 yards of ribbon.

The first floor poinsettia tree contains 78 poinsettias.



Capitol Gift Shop Stocks Holiday Gifts Galore

Looking for that unique gift with an Arkansas twist? The newly reopened Capitol Gift Shop stocks a wide variety of Arkansas products, gifts, gourmet food items, seasonal items and books. Aromatique, J & M gourmet food products, hand made toys and ornaments from various Arkansas artists and unique Arkansas gift items are all featured in the shop's inventory.

Looking for bargains? The Capitol Gift Shop offers a 10% discount to all state employees (bring your state identification with you) on all merchandise. Custom gift baskets are also available.



Plan to shop for the holidays at the Arkansas State Capitol Gift Shop. Hours of operation are 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday – Friday, with special holiday hours on December 6 to coincide with the Capitol Lighting Ceremony. For more information, or to place orders, contact Leighanne Harvey at (501) 682-3593 or e-mail tlharvey@sosmail.state.ar.us.



County Ornaments Debut on Rotunda Tree

A new holiday tradition will make its debut at the State Capitol this year. Seventy-five hand-painted ornaments, each celebrating an Arkansas county, will grace the holiday tree in the Capitol rotunda. The large gold ornaments feature painted symbols of each county chosen by individual county representatives. Placed together on the tree, the ornaments, featuring local landmarks, courthouses and various industries, represent not just the individual counties, but Arkansas as a whole. "These beautiful ornaments provide a new tradition for families to enjoy and a way for visitors to learn more about the diversity of our state," said Secretary Daniels.

Arkansas artists from the Cox Creative Center decorated the 75 ornaments with the chosen symbol. Artists providing their talents to create the ornaments were; Annette Kagy, Theda Scribner, Faye Rainwater, Jean Pennucci, Mary Rush, JoAn Knott, Arlette Miller, Judy Honey, David E. Coulter, Shirley Homsley and Sandy Felton.

The county judges, artists and members of the public are invited as special guests to the Tree-Trimming Ceremony, December 4th, 4:00 p.m. in the second floor rotunda of the state Capitol. We hope you will come join us as we begin a new tradition for the holiday season!



Secretary Daniels views some of the new County Tree Ornaments with artist David Coulter.



Holiday Decorations at the Capitol: A long-burning tradition

This winter marks the sixty-fifth anniversary of the Arkansas Capitol's first holiday illumination. Secretary of State C. G. "Crip" Hall established the tradition of decorating the state's Capitol in honor of Christmas in the late 1930s. Soon after taking office in January 1937, Hall began the process of "brightening up" the Capitol and its grounds. His goal, he stated, was to "make the Capitol a showplace."

In the following year, Hall made good on his promise in time for the Christmas holiday. On December 18, 1938, the Capitol's dome and central pediment came ablaze with the light of 1,000 red and blue electric bulbs. Just above the Capitol Avenue steps, Hall placed a 25-foot evergreen on a turntable, its branches painted silver and illuminated by blue lights. That same year Hall hosted a Christmas party for disabled and ill children from the nearby Arkansas Children's Home and Hospital. As Santa Claus looked on, Hall helped distribute toys and games and other gifts donated by state employees.

Response was swift and overwhelmingly positive. With public opinion behind him, Hall continued to decorate the Capitol for the Christmas season during his twenty-four years in office. In 1939, the Capitol's lights and fir tree (placed just in front of the bronze doors) were lit on the evening of the 11th. In 1940, a cedar tree was decorated on the east lawn. In 1941, a paper-mâché Nativity scene was set up on the east plaza, the first incarnation of what would become ever more elaborate displays in years to come.

During the years of WWII, decorations were scaled back due to wartime materials restrictions. The Capitol's holiday exterior remained dark until December 1945, when the multicolored dome lights, revolving tree and elaborate Nativity scene returned. As the years passed, more lights were added. In 1938, perhaps 1,000 lamps burned on the Capitol dome; by 1946, the figure had grown to over 4,000. In post-war years the tradition evolved into the Capitol's lighting ceremony capping the Little Rock Christmas parade, and the celebration's fame even spread nationwide. In 1954, a radio audience of perhaps 10 million heard the National Broadcasting Company's broadcast of "Christmas In

Arkansas" on 806 of its affiliated stations.

Tradition and affection for the ceremony proved to be effective preservatives. After Hall's death in 1961, his successors have continued the Capitol's decoration, making adjustments for changing times and practical matters. Nativity figures were updated from paper-mâché to more realistic rubber composition and finally to a hand carved catalpa wood nativity scene, the bright lights outlining the Capitol dome and walls returned, while other elements of the Capitol's holiday décor were updated. The "disco dome" made a brief appearance in 1987.

During the 1990s, the Capitol's holiday decorations continued their evolution. By the mid-1990s, the privately-funded Nativity scene was relocated from the Capitol's east steps to a peaceful and more naturalistic setting on the building's North Mall. Local businessman Jennings Osborne garnered much fame and some complaints during the late 1980s and early 90s from his extensive outdoor holiday decorations. Ordered by the courts to scale back his home decorations, Osborne turned his attention to providing holiday lighting displays throughout Arkansas for cities and attractions, including the Capitol. Osborne decked the Capitol with hundreds of thousands of lights from 1995 to 2002. Along with these lights came more secular elements, including annual visits from Disneyland characters.

For 2003, the Capitol's decorations will evoke a more traditional look similar to those of earlier decades. Ever changing, but remaining familiar, the holiday celebration at the Capitol continues as a beloved tradition and reminder of Secretary of State Hall's vision for the Capitol to be a showplace, especially during the holidays.



Capitol Holiday Lighting, 1959.



Capitol Halls Ring with Holiday Harmonies

Come hear the Christmas festivities!! Sounds of holiday cheer will be heard throughout the Capitol December 1 through 17, 2003. Over 150 choirs and several dance groups, from schools and churches around the state, will perform on the second floor rotunda of the Capitol building during the holiday season. These annual performances highlight the diversity of December holidays and include traditional carols as well as songs and performances that celebrate Hanukkah and Kwanzaa.

Choirs will sing from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. daily. Performance schedules can be found on our web page at www.sosweb.state.ar.us. Secretary Daniels invites you and your family to "come to the Capitol and pause during this busy season to hear these groups perform. The music really helps put you in the holiday spirit."

If you are interested in having a group participate in performances for the 2004 holiday season, please call Regina Hampton at (501) 682-7085 with contact information for your group.



The Secretary of State's office would like to thank our holiday sponsors:

Little Rock - KARK, Channel 4
Pine Bluff - Cooter Failla



11-03

Charlie Daniels

Secretary of State
Room 256 State Capitol
Little Rock, AR 72201-1094
www.sosweb.state.ar.us
501-682-1010

Presort Standard
U.S. Postage
PAID
Little Rock, AR 72201
Permit No. 2855